



How to Achieve Your Goals

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In the name of Allah, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful





Assalamu'alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuhu,

We pray that this message reaches you
in good health and imaan.

On behalf of our AMAU Academy team, we would like
to present to you these compiled notes that we have
prepared to make your journey with us a lot easier.

Our notes are compiled by the AMAU Admin team
and have not been comprehensively checked
by a teacher.

If you find any errors or corrections that need
to be made, kindly inform us via our email
helpdesk@amauacademy.com

May Allah make our paths toward seeking
beneficial knowledge easy and kindle our hearts
with sincerity and gratefulness
towards Him.

Jazakumullahu Khayran



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Glossary



جل جلاله | Jalla Jalāluhu
Allah the Most Exalted



صلى الله عليه وسلم | Sallāllāhu Alayhi Wa Sallam
Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him

Why You Should Set Goals

Chapter One

Welcome --- to the hustle and bustle of modern life!

In our fast-paced world, we're all juggling countless activities and chasing our dreams, whether they're personal or professional. It seems like everyone is on a mission to better themselves and achieve success.

And guess what? That drive for success is alive and well in Muslim communities too. Some of us are turning to the Qur'ān to deepen our Imaan, while others are diving into pursuits like coding or speed reading.

But let's face it - in today's world, distractions are everywhere. It's like we're constantly dodging shiny objects that threaten to derail our focus and determination.

For this reason, our goal is to provide you with self-development strategies that will guide you through the chaos and streamline your journey to achieving your goals. Whether you're at the beginning of your journey or already making strides, we believe you can make significant progress towards your aspirations with the right mindset and approach.

Let's Begin!

Is Goal Setting/Achievement A Secular Concept?

It's important to note that achieving goals isn't just a secular idea; it's deeply embedded in Islamic teachings too.

- 1 ● Throughout history, Islamic scholars have achieved incredible feats. Imam al-Bukhari, for instance, authored Sahih al-Bukhari, one of Islam's most magnificent works.
- 2 ● Similarly, scholars like Ad-Daraqutni, known for 'Al-'Ilal', and Imam Al-Dhahabi, author of 'Tareekh ul Islam' and 'Siyar A'lam al-Nubala', have left lasting legacies. Their dedication and efforts have not only impacted their own lives but also those of their students.

Reflect on the life of our Prophet ﷺ - the best human to have ever lived on the earth. In just 23 years of prophethood, he achieved remarkable feats beyond what even great nations could accomplish. Let his example inspire diligence and proactive pursuit of our goals.

Let us reflect upon the following hadith:

- 1 عَنْ أُمِّ سَلَمَةَ، أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - كَانَ يَقُولُ إِذَا صَلَّى الصُّبْحَ حِينَ يُسَلِّمُ "اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ عِلْمًا نَافِعًا، وَرِزْقًا طَيِّبًا، وَعَمَلًا مُتَقَبَّلًا."

It was narrated from Umm Salamah that when the Prophet (ﷺ) performed the Subh (morning prayer), while he said the Salam, he would say:

'Allahumma inni as'aluka 'ilman nafi'an, wa rizqan tayyiban, wa 'amalan mutaqabbalan (O Allah, I ask You for beneficial knowledge, goodly provision and acceptable deeds).'"

Sunan Ibn Majah 925

Let us break down this du'a. The Prophet ﷺ asked Allah ﷻ for three things:

- Beneficial knowledge
- Good sustenance or provision
- Accepted deeds

This shows that the Prophet ﷺ was outlining his primary goals and objectives for the day. Among these, the pursuit of beneficial knowledge stands out as a lofty goal and the foundation upon which the aspirations of every Muslim should be built.

Similarly, we find that Allah ﷻ commanded the Prophet ﷺ to ask for more knowledge by saying:

- 2 رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا
"My Lord! Increase me in knowledge."

Surah Taha 114

Scholars highlight that Allah did not instruct His Messenger to ask for more of anything other than what is mentioned in this verse, which is to increase him in knowledge.

In this hadith, the Prophet ﷺ asks Allah for good (Halaal) provision and sustenance - which are essential for everyone's well-being.

Additionally, he seeks Allah's acceptance of his deeds, highlighting the significance of righteous actions to earn Allah's Pleasure. By commencing his day with this supplication, the Prophet ﷺ set clear objectives for himself.

Setting goals is innate to human nature, and for Muslims, the ultimate aim is to worship Allah.

Allah ﷻ says in the Qur'ān:

3

أَيَحْسَبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنْ يُتْرَكَ سُدًى

Does man think that he will be left neglected (without being punished or rewarded for the obligatory duties enjoined by his Lord Allāh on him)?

Surah Al-Qiyamah 36

Human beings have a fundamental purpose, primarily to worship Allah, as emphasised in the hadith of the Prophet ﷺ. It's crucial to align our actions with this goal.

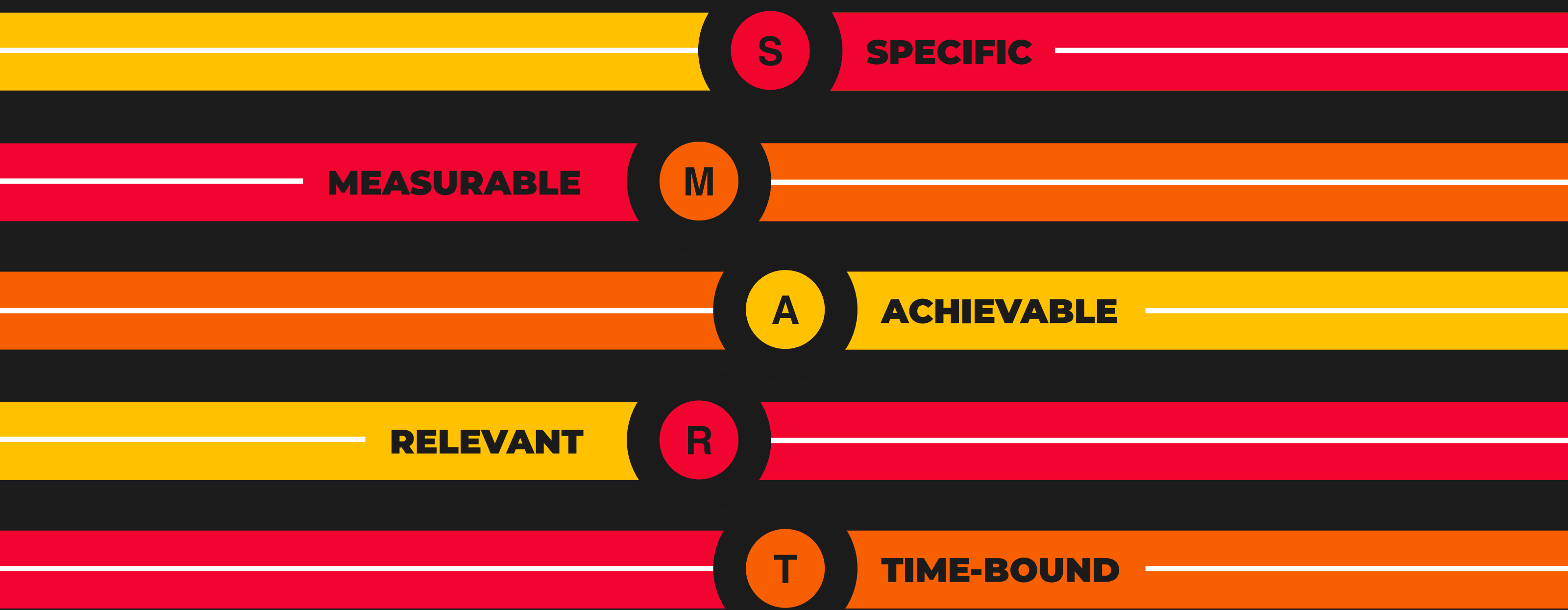
In conclusion, setting goals isn't foreign to Islam; it's been practised by scholars of our Deen and Muslim leaders throughout history.

Being a S.M.A.R.T. Muslim

Chapter Two

In this chapter, we explore a framework for effective goal-setting: S.M.A.R.T.

It provides a structured approach to establishing tasks, goals, and targets that are both attainable and realistic.



Let us learn about one of these in detail:



SPECIFIC

It is crucial to be clear and specific when setting goals. Often, our goals tend to be too broad and vague, making it difficult to track progress or know whether we have achieved them.

Let's take the example of wanting to become a better Muslim. There are several ways to improve as a Muslim, such as reading the Qur'an more, praying additional prayers, and giving more charity. However, unless we specify what we want to improve, it's hard to measure progress.

To make our goals more specific, we need to identify a particular aspect of being a better Muslim that we want to work on.

- For instance, we can specify that we want to increase in offering Salah. Thus we set a goal of becoming consistent in praying the Sunnah prayers (Rawaatib) before and after each obligatory prayer.
- Likewise, we may set a target of reciting the Qur'an every day for a fixed period of time - say 3 hours.
- Alternatively, one may commit to being regular in performing the night prayers (Tahajjud), and so on.

These three goals are related to the idea of being a good Muslim.

By pinpointing a specific area for improvement, we establish a clear target that facilitates measurement and progress tracking.



MEASURABLE

Once a specific goal, such as reading more Qur'an, has been established, the next step is to make it measurable. Without clear metrics, tracking progress and determining success becomes challenging.

For example, if the aim is to increase your recitation of the Qur'an, it's essential to specify the extent of the increase. Begin by asking yourself some questions, such as:

- Will the additional reading amount to three pages daily? Six pages?
- Will there be a gradual increase in the number of pages over time?

Similarly, if the objective is to give more in Sadaqah, it's crucial to quantify the amount and frequency of giving. Addressing these questions helps to refine the target and ensure it is measurable.



ACHIEVABLE

Let's now ensure that our goals are within reach. In Islam, we're encouraged to steadily pursue good deeds, just like the esteemed scholars of the past.

- Consider the remarkable dedication of Imam Ahmad, who fervently prayed 300 rak'ahs daily in his youth.
- Similarly, Imam Shafi'i spent his nights immersed in studying and contemplating fiqh, even completing the Qur'ān an astounding 60 times during Ramadan!

While these anecdotes are awe-inspiring, it's vital to remember that such accomplishments were the result of persistent effort and unwavering commitment over time.

Setting achievable goals is subjective and varies based on individual circumstances. For some, reading 20 pages of the Qur'ān each day may feel manageable, while for others, especially young parents or those less accustomed to regular Qur'ān reading, it may pose a more significant challenge.

It's crucial to be realistic and honest with ourselves about our capabilities. Setting goals that stretch us but remain attainable is key.

Dreaming big is commendable, but fantasising about goals beyond our capabilities often results in disappointment and frustration.

The Prophet ﷺ said:

- 1 يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنَ الْأَعْمَالِ مَا تُطِيقُونَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَمَلُّ حَتَّى تَمَلُّوا وَإِنَّ أَحَبَّ الْأَعْمَالِ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَا دَوَّوِمَ عَلَيْهِ وَإِنْ قَلَّ". وَكَانَ آلُ مُحَمَّدٍ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِذَا عَمِلُوا عَمَلًا أَتَبَّثُوهُ.

O people, perform such acts as you are capable of doing, for Allah does not grow weary but you will get tired. The acts most pleasing to Allah are those which are done continuously, even if they are small. And it was the habit of the members of Muhammad's (ﷺ) household that whenever they did an act they did it continuously.

Sahih Muslim 782a



RELEVANT

This emphasises the importance of setting relevant goals. In an Islamic context, our goals must align with our Islamic objectives.

For instance, if your goal is to read extra pages of the Qur'ān daily, it should align with your broader aim, such as memorising the Qur'ān. This ensures that your efforts contribute to meaningful outcomes in line with your Islamic aspirations. It's all about setting goals that resonate with you personally.

Conversely, setting vague goals like "becoming a better Muslim" without specifying how it connects to specific Islamic practices may lack clarity and relevance.

For example, if your objective is to increase your charitable acts, simply reading more Qur'ān daily may not directly contribute to achieving that goal. Likewise, setting goals that contradict your Islamic values would not serve your aspirations.

WORDS OF WISDOM

Scholars emphasise that actions whose benefits extend beyond oneself, reaching others, hold greater value than deeds that solely benefit the individual.

In the SMART framework, Relevance also involves prioritising among different good deeds. When confronted with various options like helping out in the Masjid, reading Qur'ān, performing night prayers, or giving Sadaqah, it's crucial to prioritise actions that benefit the most people or have the most significant impact.



TIME-BOUND

Setting a deadline injects a sense of urgency and responsibility into our goals. When we establish a timeframe for accomplishing our objectives, it drives us to take action and maintain focus on progress.

For instance, consider the goal of memorising the Qur'ān:

SPECIFIC	● Memorising the Qur'ān
MEASURABLE	● Breaking down the memorisation into manageable parts or pages
ACHIEVABLE	● With dedication, a conducive environment, and a good memory, memorising the Qur'ān is attainable
RELEVANT	● Memorising the Qur'ān aligns with the aim of enhancing religious knowledge and becoming a better Muslim

However, without a specific deadline, the clarity on when to complete the Qur'ān may be lacking. By setting a timeframe, such as aiming to finish within 4 or 5 years, you infuse your goal with a sense of urgency and purpose. It's crucial to ensure that the timeframe you set is realistic and feasible.

For instance, aiming to memorise the entire Qur'ān in just 6 months may be challenging for many people. Therefore, consider the feasibility of your timeframe to ensure it aligns with your capabilities and circumstances.

The SMART framework provides a comprehensive approach to goal setting and achievement. By ensuring that your goals are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound, you set yourself up for success and progress in your endeavours.

Three Keys To Overcome Challenges and Difficulties - Part 1



Chapter Three

In any endeavour, challenges and obstacles are bound to arise. There may come moments when you realise the necessity for additional time or the need to reassess your goals.

Life's circumstances, as decreed by Allah ﷻ, may demand that you adapt and realign your objectives, making adjustments to your plans while maintaining focus on your ultimate goals.

There are three keys to overcoming challenges and difficulties:

1 Patience - صبر

First and foremost is patience.

Allah ﷻ says in the Qur'ān:

1 وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ , الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمُ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ
[...] but give glad tidings to As-Sâbirûn (the patient).Who, when afflicted with calamity, say: "Truly! To Allâh we belong and truly, to Him we shall return."

Surah Al-Baqarah 155-156

Imam Ahmad mentions that patience is emphasised throughout the Qur'ān, mentioned over 90 times in various forms by Allah ﷻ.

Allah ﷻ gives believers good and glad tidings if they remain patient. Allah ﷻ promises them rewards that are boundless and beyond comprehension, unattainable by anyone other than them.

Keep Your Eyes on The Prize

We all encounter challenges and difficulties while pursuing lofty ambitions. There comes a point where things can feel overwhelming, and we may be tempted to quit.

"Ah, this is not working."

"It's not going well. Maybe I should just quit."

Think about the last time you abandoned something beneficial that you had planned to achieve. What caused you to falter?

Ibn al-Qayyim emphasises that patience involves keeping one's mind and eyes fixed on the greater reward or ultimate goal you hope to achieve. The light at the end of the tunnel should motivate us to keep moving forward.

If you maintain your focus on the prize—the ultimate goal you are striving for—it can help you push through tough times.

Whether your goal is memorising the Qur'an, seeking knowledge, or becoming a better Muslim through acts of charity and other good deeds, remember that the reward from Allah ﷻ will be waiting for you on the Day of Judgment. What you achieve at the end of the journey is worth every bruise and wound you endure along the way.

Adopting this mindset is a helpful way to ensure that you remain patient in the face of adversity.

The Pitfalls of Laziness

Imam al-Qayyim emphasised that patience is indispensable for achieving anything worthwhile in life. Anything that is worth its weight in gold is worth having patience for.

He elucidated that this is the divine decree of Allah ﷻ, and those who anticipate success without exerting effort and enduring hardships will inevitably fall short and achieve nothing.

To attain meaningful accomplishments, we must be prepared to face challenges, setbacks, and difficulties along the journey. It is through perseverance and patience that we cultivate resilience and ultimately reach our goals, by the will of Allah ﷻ.

Imam al-Qayyim highlighted a universal truth recognised by wise individuals across cultures: blessings, success, and even reaching paradise cannot be attained through laziness.

Those accustomed to a leisurely lifestyle of no effort or hard work will find themselves incapable of achieving anything substantial. Eventually, they will realise the insufficiency of this approach and must abandon it.

Count Your Blessings

Imam al-Qayyim emphasises that a crucial aspect of maintaining patience is to reflect on the blessings of Allah ﷻ.

In times of challenges or hardships, when it seems like everything is against us, contemplating the countless blessings bestowed upon us by Allah ﷻ helps us persevere.

Take, for instance, the stories of Prophet Yusuf عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام and Prophet Musa عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام. Despite facing numerous trials and tribulations, they remained steadfast by recalling Allah's ﷻ blessings and favours upon them.

This is why Allah ﷻ says in the Qur'an:

2

فَاصْبِرْ كَمَا صَبَرَ أُولُو الْعَزْمِ

Therefore be patient (O Muhammad ﷺ) as did the Messengers of strong will

Surah Al-Ahqaf 35

Allah ﷻ instructs our Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to exhibit patience, just as the messengers of strong determination did. This verse highlights the importance of patience as a virtue, not only for the Prophet ﷺ but for all believers.

Three Keys To Overcome Challenges And Difficulties - Part 2

Chapter Four

2 Reliance - تَوَكَّلْ

Reliance on Allah ﷻ is paramount for achieving your goals.

Seeking Allah's ﷻ Guidance in Setting Goals

Let's revisit and contemplate a hadith mentioned in Chapter 1:

1

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو بَكْرِ بْنُ أَبِي شَيْبَةَ، حَدَّثَنَا شَبَابَةُ، حَدَّثَنَا شُعْبَةُ، عَنْ مُوسَى بْنِ أَبِي عَائِشَةَ، عَنْ مَوْلَى، لُؤْمٍ سَلَمَةَ عَنْ أُمِّ سَلَمَةَ، أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ - صلى الله عليه وسلم - كَانَ يَقُولُ إِذَا صَلَّى الصُّبْحَ حِينَ يُسَلِّمُ "اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ عِلْمًا نَافِعًا، وَرِزْقًا طَيِّبًا، وَعَمَلًا مُتَقَبَّلًا".

It was narrated from Umm Salamah that when the Prophet (ﷺ) performed the Subh (morning prayer), while he said the Salam, he would say:

‘Allahumma inni as’aluka ‘ilman nafi’an, wa rizqan tayyiban, wa ‘amalan mutaqabbalan (O Allah, I ask You for beneficial knowledge, goodly provision and acceptable deeds).’”

Sunan Ibn Majah 925

Observe this supplication of the Prophet ﷺ. He initiated by beseeching Allah, which is an integral aspect of Tawakkul—reliance on Allah ﷻ.

He sought guidance and assistance from Allah ﷻ for his targets/goals that he set for the day, acknowledging that all power lies with Him alone, and success is attained only through His will, mercy, and might.

As we know from the powerful supplication:

2

لا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللّٰهِ

There is no power and no strength except with Allah.

The Essence of Tawakkul

Allah ﷻ says in the Qur’ān:

3

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

You (Alone) we worship, and You (Alone) we ask for help (for each and everything).

Surah Al-Fatihah 5

This is why Ibn al-Qayyim said, “Tawakkul [reliance on Allah] is half of the religion. As for the other half, it is Inābah [to return to Allah in all affairs and repentance].”

Let us closely examine this verse from Surah Al-Fatihah:

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ

● You ‘alone’ we worship.

This is إِنْابَةٌ — worshipping Allah ﷻ and returning to Him.

وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

● and You 'alone' we ask for help.

This is Tawakkul—seeking Allah's ﷻ assistance, relying on Him, entrusting our affairs to Him, and placing our trust in Allah ﷻ wholeheartedly.

Some scholars say that the heart relies upon Allah ﷻ in achieving whatever one wants to achieve. This does not contradict the idea of taking the means or "الأسباب" legislated for reaching your objectives.

This is exactly what the Prophet ﷺ did. He supplicated to Allah ﷻ, placed his trust in Him, and then diligently sought knowledge. He performed actions to the best of his ability. He carried out the necessary deeds and followed the prescribed means, all while relying on Allah ﷻ and placing his trust in Him.

Therefore, when you are setting your targets, never forget to rely on Allah ﷻ and seek His assistance. If you aim to memorise the Qur'ān, earnestly supplicate to Allah ﷻ for His guidance and assistance in this noble endeavour. It is a profound blessing from Allah ﷻ and should not be taken lightly.

Similarly, if your goal is to become a better Muslim, continually turn to Allah for help and support. This practice should be ingrained in every step of setting and pursuing your targets, especially when facing hurdles and obstacles along the way.

Always return to Allah ﷻ and seek His aid in overcoming these challenges.

3 Optimism

When confronting obstacles along the journey, stay optimistic. Prophet ﷺ favoured positive language and encouraged optimism over negativity.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said in a hadith:

4

اِحْرِصْ عَلَى مَا يَنْفَعُكَ وَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ وَلَا تَعْجِزْ فَإِنْ أَصَابَكَ شَيْءٌ فَلَا تَقُلْ لَوْ أَنِّي فَعَلْتُ كَذَا وَكَذَا . وَلَكِنْ قُلْ قَدَّرَ اللَّهُ وَمَا شَاءَ فَعَلَ فَإِنَّ " لَوْ " تَفْتَحُ عَمَلَ الشَّيْطَانِ .

Strive for that which will benefit you, seek the help of Allah, and do not feel helpless. If anything befalls you, do not say, "if only I had done such and such" rather say "Qaddara Allahu wa ma sha'a fa'ala (Allah has decreed and whatever he wills, He does)." For (saying) 'If' opens (the door) to the deeds of Satan.'

Sunan Ibn Majah 79

Prophet ﷺ advised us to seek what is beneficial and to set goals that lead us closer to Allah. When setting your goals, aim for objectives that bring you closer to Allah, increase your Imaan and make you a better Muslim. Even in worldly affairs, prioritise goals that align with your Deen.

- For instance, if you aspire to pursue a degree from a specific university or engage in certain professions, do so with good intentions. Your noble intentions can transform ordinary actions into acts of worship. Whether it is to earn money to support your family, provide for your parents, contribute to charity, or fulfil other obligations, ensure that your goals are aligned with seeking the pleasure of Allah.

As previously discussed in the section on Tawakkul, always seek Allah's assistance in your endeavours. Refrain from weakness and negative thinking. Avoid thoughts of incapability or failure. Instead, maintain a positive mindset and optimism.

Dealing with Low Self-Esteem

One of the prevalent challenges within our Ummah is the issue of low self-esteem.

We are the Ummah of Muhammad - the inheritors of the Prophet ﷺ and his companions, as well as their righteous successors.

Allah ﷻ says about our Ummah in the Qur'ān:

5

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ

You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind.

Surah Ali' Imran 110

We should draw strength from our history and believe that we can achieve what our predecessors did, as long as we adhere to Allah's ﷻ Book and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Low self-esteem should have no place in our hearts.

There is nothing that differentiates you from those residing in more prosperous nations. In fact, you may even possess keys that they do not.

Embrace Allah's ﷻ Decree in the Face of Adversity

Unexpected events are inevitable occurrences in life. This is why the Prophet ﷺ said in the hadith we mentioned previously:

6

"فَإِنْ أَصَابَكَ شَيْءٌ فَلَا تَقُلْ لَوْ أَنِّي فَعَلْتُ كَذَا وَكَذَا . وَلَكِنْ قُلْ قَدَرَهُ اللَّهُ وَمَا شَاءَ فَعَلَ فَإِنَّ "لَوْ" تَفْتَحُ عَمَلَ الشَّيْطَانِ"

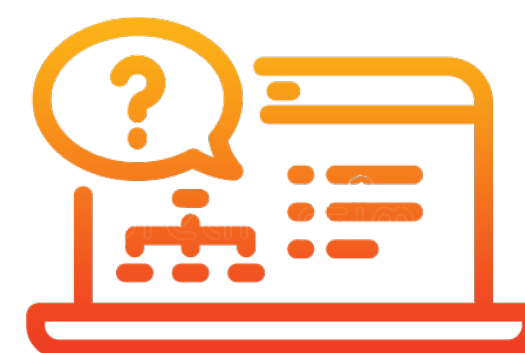
[...] If anything befalls you, do not say, "if only I had done such and such" rather say "Qaddara Allahu wa ma sha'a fa'ala (Allah has decreed and whatever he wills, He does)." For (saying) 'If opens (the door) to the deeds of Satan.'

Sunan Ibn Majah 79

This serves as an overview of how we can unite to set and achieve our goals, especially in a time when it is increasingly challenging to do so, given the digital age and the numerous distractions brought about by social media and technology.

We must recognise that certain apps and websites are designed to consume our time unknowingly. One can easily lose track of time scrolling endlessly, only to realise that precious moments have slipped away. These seemingly insignificant minutes and hours accumulate over time, resulting in a significant loss of productivity and opportunities.

Therefore, it is essential to make the most of our time and prioritise tasks that bring us closer to our goals and, ultimately, closer to Allah ﷻ.



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